



CASA of Yavapai County
1100 Prescott Lakes Pkwy
Prescott, AZ 86301
www.CASAOfYavapaiCounty.org

CASA of Yavapai County mourns child welfare advocate, Barbara Jean “Barb” Polk

Prescott, AZ – September 1, 2021 – To many, she was known as the “Prescott Pioneer.” Her passion to advocate for children was endless. She was determined to enrich the lives of children who had been abused and/or neglected and made tireless efforts to ensure they had a chance in this world. It is with great sadness that we announce Barbara Jean “Barb” Polk passed away on August 9, 2021 alongside her lifelong husband, Gene.

Barbara and Gene move to Prescott, Arizona in 1956 where they settled and raised their family. Barbara began serving as an emergency foster placement, caring for newborn infants, through Catholic Social Services. Barbara saw the flaws in the Childwelfare system and began working to narrow the gap. The list of Barbara’s advocacy efforts and the positive impact she made in the lives of children and families is almost endless:



- 1971 - Barbara co-founded Yavapai Big Brothers Big Sisters where she sat on the board and was a Big Sister to several girls for over 40 years.
- 1979 - Barbara started volunteering as one of the original Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) members.
- Throughout her years working with children in the foster care system, she realized the need for extra support. In 1983 Barbara co-founded Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation (AFFCF). Today AFFCF is a well-established statewide organization providing over \$2 million annually to children which helps fund extracurricular activities and equipment, summer camps, tutoring, initial housing grants and scholarships, just to name a few.
- In 1989 Barbara applied to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer with CASA of Yavapai. She advocated for children’s best interests and served as the court’s eyes and ears for 24 years.
- Barbara received the National CASA Volunteer of the Year Award in 1995 because of her strong presence in the community.
- Barbara was the first person to win the Outstanding Contributor to the Arizona Courts Award in 2002, selected by the Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice.
- As a persistent advocate for children, in 2001 Barbara became a co-founder of the Yavapai CASA for Kids Foundation which works to enrich the lives of children in foster care. In gratitude for her lifelong dedication to children, the Yavapai CASA for Kids Foundation will name their new Family Visitation Center located in Prescott Valley, Arizona in honor of Barbara Polk.

Barbara was well known and respected throughout Arizona's child welfare community. She crossed the paths of many and left lasting impressions.

Chief Justice Robert Brutinel, Arizona Supreme Court:

"Barbara was one of those unique people who not only made a difference in individual children's lives but also changed and improved the child welfare system statewide. Barbara was instrumental in creating Arizona's CASA program, along with the Foster Care Review Board and Yavapai CASA for Kids. But I think of Barbara as a CASA volunteer. She was a powerful advocate for her kids, always prepared and on top of the case. She built lifelong relationships and made life better for the children she represented. Barbara put in the time, everyday, making a difference one child at a time."

Eileen Bond, former Assistant Attorney General, retired Judge Pro Tem; current CASA:

"Barbara has been my idol since I first met her in the 80's. She was creative, caring and compassionate. She would see a need and find a way to fill it – not just for one child but for children in general. Not just for now but for the future. She would get things done. She knew who to go to, how to ask, what to ask for and how to make resources available to those in need. She knew how to get things done for the kids --and she did the work."

Paula Burroughs, the first (and Barbara's) CASA Coordinator for CASA of Yavapai County, ally and friend:

"Barbara Jean always put her nose to the grindstone; she was a doer and impactful. She had a real sense to her. She was always so respectful... to everyone. She valued everyone. She was the most amazing woman I have ever known."

Dave Byers, Arizona Supreme Court; Administrative Office of the Courts, Director:

"I have known Barbara for over 40 years. She was instrumental in establishing FCRB, the CASA program and the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation. Sometimes God sends an angel down from heaven to walk with us humans and perform good work. Barbara must have been one of his angels."

Quinci Castleberry, CASA of Yavapai County Program Manager:

"I met Barb when I started working as the Administrative Assistant for the CASA office in Yavapai County back in 2013. Barb used to call the office often, always wanting to brainstorm on how we could encourage other CASAs in the program. Many years prior to me working for CASA, she wrote a little booklet about children in the foster care system and she and I revived that booklet into articles for our CASA monthly newsletter. She wanted to do it anonymously though. That was Barb, never wanting the spotlight on herself. Barb's heart was always focused on our kids in care. She was a wonderful mentor and friend and always had something kind or encouraging to say. I will miss her and her phone calls."

Barbara Polk will be remembered forever for her genuine commitment to children through all walks of life.

If Barbara's story has impacted you, consider volunteering to make a difference in the lives of children in your community. Below are several of the organizations in which Barbara was involved:

- CASA of Yavapai County
 - www.CASAofYavapaiCounty.org
 - 928-771-3165
- Foster Care Review Board (Statewide Boards)
 - www.azcourts.gov/FCRB
 - 602-452-3400
- Yavapai CASA for Kids Foundation
 - www.ycfk.org
 - 928-445-0800
- Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation
 - www.affcf.org
 - 602-252-9445
- Yavapai Big Brothers Big Sisters
 - www.azbigs.org
 - 928-778-5135